



# BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE



Summer 2013

Benedictine Nuns • St. Emma Monastery • 1001 Harvey Avenue • Greensburg, PA 15601

Website [www.stemma.org](http://www.stemma.org) • Phone: (724) 834-3060 • Fax (724) 834-5772 • Email [benedictinenuns@stemma.org](mailto:benedictinenuns@stemma.org)





# Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



advance opens up new vistas.

Take GPS for instance. The “original” GPS provided an answer to one of the ultimate, human questions, “Where are we going?” A monastery was a visible answer to this “God Positioning System” question!

The specialization of the modern GPS directs us from Point A to Point B—whether across town or country. It might also add “Local Attractions and Weather” but it refers to immediate destinations with no reference to our Ultimate Destination.

The monastery was and remains a place of curiosity. Why would people live like this? How can God be so real to these people that they give up what we all prize the most? How does God become the Person in their life—a relationship that precludes marriage and family, personal ownership of goods, and determining one’s own decisions?

The monastery in the Middle Ages was “one stop shopping” for laity. People were educated in the arts and sciences, received medicinal aids, asked for help with the basic necessities of life, recognized a safe shelter in monastic guest houses on their journeys, sought legal advice and discussed the Ultimate Questions. As people shared the wrenching “Whys” of their lives, they found sympathetic hearts, hearts grounded in God.

## Benedictine Nuns Daily Prayer Schedule

5:25 a.m. ~ Vigils

6:30 a.m. ~ Lauds

7:00 a.m. ~ Eucharist

Lectio Divina I

8:40 a.m. ~ Terce

11:45 a.m. ~ Sext/None

5:00 p.m. ~ Vespers

7:30 p.m. ~ Compline ~ Lectio Divina II

Specialization has impacted every area of our lives. Knowledge has so increased and each

Education has not only become compartmentalized but often undermines and belittles religious beliefs or practices. Our medical abilities to “do things” often skip the question, “Should this even be done?”

We are blessed to have agencies, both governmental, church related and private, to help people in times of disasters, personal losses, and in their general “down and out” periods. Again, there is a danger that political correctness will challenge or contradict our Christian beliefs. Those who follow Christ’s teaching to feed, shelter, and give care to the needy now have government regulations working against them.

Offering hospitality is core to Benedictine tradition. Did perhaps the “Holiday Inns” originate as “Holyday” Inns? The Motel 6 slogan says, they will “leave the light on for you.” In Catholic Churches there is always a light burning for us known as the Sanctuary Light or the Presence candle to indicate the Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

In our world, a monastery is a “Presence” light. Our existence announces that life’s true meaning and happiness are found in God whether one’s vocation is to the married, lay, priestly or religious state.

In this age of specialization, I suggest that a monastery is the cardiac center of the church and the world. Jesus desires that our hearts become like His, beating with the universal love of the Father for each person.

As Benedictines, we profess the vow of “conversion of life” or the “pursuit of perfection (of loving) according to a monastic manner of life.” This obviously centers on our heart becoming more Christ-centered and Christ-like, stronger and more caring.

We hear so much about heart blockages, high/low blood pressure, good/bad cholesterol, etc., as indicators of how well our heart is functioning to supply the rest of our bodies with its needed nourishment.

The Christian heart suffers from many of the same conditions. Our life lines (arteries) are often blocked

by memories and experiences of the past, by un-Christian choices or patterns, by letting our minds and hearts be fed by the “junk foods” of political correctness, “everybody does it,” and “the Church has to get with it.”

It is no wonder that the Church often appears weak when we, the individual members of this Body, are so weak.

A monastery is also a visible cardiac center for those who approach us with hearts that have been shattered by the loss of a loved one or other devastating conditions.

A monastery is also a cardiac rehab not only for us monks and nuns but also for the guests and retreatants who experience “health” provided by a Provident Father who meets them here so that they might return home with greater spiritual gifts and practices.

So when you are checking your GPS to get you to your vacation spot, a business meeting, or a relative’s new home, ask yourself about the original GPS: your God Positioning System and find directions to a local monastery. Our address is 1001 Harvey Avenue, Greensburg, PA 15601. Hope to see you here!

Blessed journey HOME!

*Mother Mary Anne Noll, OSB*

Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB

The ***Benedictine Touchstone*** is published by the Sisters of St. Benedict of Westmoreland County for our friends and benefactors:

Publisher and Editor  
*Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB*  
Development Director  
*Mary Kay Swenson*  
Graphic Arts and Design  
*Susan Garrison*

If you have questions or comments about this publication, please address them to:

St. Emma Monastery  
1001 Harvey Avenue  
Greensburg, PA 15601-1494  
Phone (724) 834-3060

Email: [benedictinenuns@stemma.org](mailto:benedictinenuns@stemma.org)  
[www.stemma.org](http://www.stemma.org)

# A LOVE STORY

By Mary Kay Swenson

*"The Church is not a bureaucratic organization, but a love story."*

—Pope Francis

What a beautiful reflection; a love story indeed! Christ gave us such a perfect example of love and calls us to love as He did. I am privileged to witness this love firsthand at St. Emma Monastery. At the very heart of the Community life of the Monastery is prayer. The Benedictine Nuns gather six times each day for Mass and *The Liturgy of the Hours*. From there they live out the Gospel Message in their everyday lives.

Many people will never have the opportunity to personally visit a monastery, nor do they fully understand "what the Nuns do". Please allow me to give a brief insight into their lives.

First of all, each Nun has dedicated her life to serving God through her vows. After prayerful discernment on her part and on the part of the Nuns, a woman joins the community.

Their ministry is their monastic life; they pray, work, eat and live in the monas-

tery. For instance, these Benedictine Nuns would not be dining at local restaurants or in private homes. The community is her family and the common meals have a sacral character, usually accompanied by table reading.

The Sisters "do" all of the things you or I do in maintaining a home, except that their home is much larger and their physical "world" is much smaller (because the monastery is basically their world).

The Sisters spend endless hours helping others. It is not unusual for a person to inquire from them where they might obtain some help for spiritual or temporal assistance. In each case, they are welcomed and loved. It is a pure love, of the heart; from Christ Himself. It is a love that is replenished through intense prayer and renewed in each offering to another human.

The Sisters are praying for you! Can you imagine that six times each day the Sisters are lifting up your needs and the needs of the world to God?

Someone recently asked me how

much the Sisters get paid and who pays them! The answers are "nothing" and "no one". They receive no salary, no budgeted monies from any outside source (as is true for religious communities in general).

Of course, the next question is always "How do they live?" As the cover letter from Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB explains, the money they earn from the retreats, the gift shop, and now the B&B only goes so far. For the rest, they rely on God's Providence—expressed in wonderful volunteers and in your generous support.

When people give to the Sisters, they give because they want to be a part of this life which they believe in - they give because they believe in the power of Love, the power of prayer and of sacrifice. It is a beautiful, beautiful experience.

I wish for each of you reading this that you could also experience the serenity, the sacred, the love that is lived each and every day at St. Emma Monastery. If you ever have the opportunity, please know that you are always welcome to stop in, to say hello, to join the Sisters in prayer, to receive their blessing and to experience the Love of God here on Earth.

## White Smoke: Habemus Papam!

Like the rest of the world, especially the Catholic world, we were surprised at the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and awaited the "white smoke" announcement of his successor.

On her way back from a doctor's appointment, our Sr. Franziska listened to the radio, heard the words, "white smoke," and wondered how she could let us know at once.

Green lights ushered her through Greensburg to our local pharmacy. Sr. Franziska rushed in, said there was "white smoke" and could she call the monastery. The business phone was too far away, so the cashier used her cell phone. When I answered my cell phone, Sr. Franziska said, "There is white smoke." We called the community together, notified the homeschoolers meeting at St. Emma's, and made a few phone calls—before friends began to notify us of the news!

In January we received a really large screen TV for our Flea Market with the information that the color was not quite right. Volunteers carefully carried this huge flat TV screen around our large buildings to a cable channel hook-up for our Bed & Breakfast—just two days before the Papal election. We also enjoyed seeing the large picture of Pope Francis' inaugural Mass March 19 beginning at 3:30 am. What a wonderful gift from modern media!

(P.S. After watching the DVD on St. Emma Monastery that was shown during



the Fundraising dinner here at the end of April, the donors of this TV asked what we did to get it to work so perfectly. We answered, "We plugged it in!" (They couldn't believe it!)



# Let them Prefer Nothing

## By Sister Maria Johanna, OSB

My vocation story starts when I was interested in converting to Catholicism, my senior year of High School. I wasn't raised in a particular church, although I did end up attending the Methodist Church with my mother and step dad when visiting them on weekends. As I became more involved with the Methodist Church, I felt like there was something missing. I listened to a friend and became very interested in the Catholic Church.

I attended the University of Pittsburgh for my undergraduate degree. One other person from my graduating class was going to go to Pitt's main campus in Oakland, and she "just happened" to be Catholic. At a Wednesday night cookout during orientation, I learned about the RCIA meetings the next week. I showed up on the door step and asked about converting.

The summer before college, I was reading a spiritual book by a nun and the thought/ image came to my mind about being a religious sister. I just sat there and pondered where that came from. I thought how funny it would be if at this same time next year I would be Catholic and looking into joining an order. I tried to put it out of my head and focused on becoming a medical missionary. But the thought kept coming up; it gave me greatest sense of peace about what I was going to do with my life.

Everyone asks the famous question; what are you planning to do with your life? The one thought that kept popping up was that I was to join a religious order, but I couldn't say that to anyone. The greatest problem with this was that I wasn't Catholic and had never met a religious or even talked to a priest. So when the RCIA program was announced at the cookout, I knew that I had to join.

I became very involved with the undergrad program offered by the Catholic Campus ministers, run by the Fathers of the Oratory. I kept the thought of becoming a religious in the back of my mind and heart. I had

a wonderful relationship with a young man from CMU (keeping all of my options open). While we were dating I just keep feeling like I was taking away time that I should be giving to the Lord. After a while we ended the relationship, and today he is happily married with children. I learned





# giving whatsoever to Christ.

a lot about myself during that time, and I still felt called to give myself completely to the service of the church as a religious. I started looking into orders, a search that lasted six years.

At this point in my life I stopped looking for an order to join. I felt the need to find out where God wanted me to be. I was accepted into the teaching program at the University of Pittsburgh so I went on to get my teaching degree.

I still felt that tug, however, and decided to visit some more religious orders. A priest friend of mine knew Mother Mary Anne and recommended a visit to St. Emma Monastery.

I spent the first part of the week at St. Emma walking and praying. They were having their first Auction /Flea Market (1999), and I made the “mistake” of asking if they needed any help! I seemed to kind of fit in with them. I observed how they interacted both in prayer and at work. The day of the Auction I was asked to be at the welcome tent. I had only been there for four days at this point. At the end of my visit, I sat in my room, looked at the crucifix and just laughed. “Now after going back to school and getting further in debt, you show me the place where you want me,” I thought.

I visited the monastery over the next couple of years. Due to my financial situation I had to wait to enter because I needed to be out of debt.

My Easter miracle was multi-faceted. I had just been told that I wasn’t being rehired at the school where I was teaching. The ladies whose house I was watching came back earlier than I had anticipated. I prayed to God that He had to do something soon if He wanted me to enter before I was on social security. This was a long Lent.

Easter came with several definite signs that St. Emma Monastery was where God wanted me. Several anonymous benefactors came forward and had made arrangements with my Pastor to cover my student loans while I was in the Monastery. Later that week a former employer called and asked if I wanted some summer work, which turned into full time work. With this wonderful turn of events, Mother offered to let me to stay here while I was finishing up other obligations. What was looking like five to eight years before entering turned into eight months, and I entered as a postulant in January 2002. God really did grant me the miracles needed for me to enter when and where He wanted me to be.

### Immersion Experiences

Corpus Christi, May 31-June 2, 2013

Thanksgiving Weekend,

November 29-December 1, 2013



## *Pope Francis: Living Our Faith*

By Mary Kay Swenson

As most of us know, March 13, 2013 marked the election of the 266th successor of Saint Peter as the Bishop of Rome. On this historic day, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina became known to the world as "Pope Francis."



What you may not know is that he chose the name Francis because, when at the moment the vote reached a two-third majority, Cardinal Claudio Hummes leaned over to congratulate him and said, "Do not forget about the poor." Pope Francis, pointing to his heart, said, "This word entered here" and

he thought of Saint Francis of Assisi. He continued, "And this is how the name came to me, in my heart: Francis of Assisi. The man of the poor, the man of peace, the man who loves and cares for creation – in this moment when we don't have a very good relationship with creation, no?" he added. "A man who gives us this spirit of peace, a poor man ... Ah, how much I would like a poor church, for the poor!"

Demonstrating his humility, his first action as Pope was to ask the world's blessing for him as he began his leadership of the Church on earth. The world seemed to embrace him instantly. Already he has six million followers on Twitter.

His messages for all of us echo the Gospel message of Christ "not to be afraid." Hinting of the crosses we must each bear, he tells us that "to enter the glory of God demands fidelity to his will, even when it requires sacrifice." Most importantly, he reminds us that "Jesus' ascension into heaven does not mean his absence, but that he is alive among us in a new way, close to each one of us."

### *Previous Chaplain Is New Bishop of Erie, PA*

A monastery collects an amazing amount of information. On July 31, 2012 our chaplain told us before Mass that it had just been announced that Rev. Msgr. Lawrence T. Persico, one of our previous chaplains (1988-1998), had just been named the new bishop of Erie, PA.



Waiting until the parish office of St. James, New Alexandria, PA would open, I called to give our Congratulations to the new bishop. The secretary's response was that Msgr. Persico had gone away the afternoon before and would be back later in the day. She had not heard that her pastor had been named the new bishop of Erie!

We want to publicly acknowledge Bishop Persico's ten years faithful service as chaplain to our community and promise him a continued remembrance in our prayers. May the Lord bless you, Bishop Persico and the people of your diocese, Erie.



Standing before the beautifully set table in the dining room of the Robertshaw Country House Bed & Breakfast, Carol Francese and Toots Manning (sisters) check again if everything is in place for their "FBI" ("Full Blooded Italian") dinner that they offer each year at our annual Fundraiser Dinner. The highest bidder even gets to choose from various homemade Italian foods.

## *Robertshaw Bed and Breakfast*

Coming to the Greensburg area for a graduation, wedding, special event or to get away?  
Planning your next year's Christmas trip?



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*Eighth Annual Dinner & Silent Auction*

*Our thanks to those who made the evening a success! May God bless you abundantly!*





## HUGE INDOOR/OUTDOOR FLEA MARKET

(AIR CONDITIONED)

THURSDAY, JUNE 13 (4-7 PM)

EARLY ADMISSION: \$5; PIZZA, POP AVAILABLE

FRIDAY, JUNE 14 (10 A.M. – 7 P.M.)

SATURDAY, JUNE 15 (10 A.M. - 1 P.M., 50% OFF ITEMS;  
1 - 3 P.M. BAG SALE)

*Dishes • Glassware • Children's items •  
Furniture • Tools • Seasonal items • Books  
• CDs • DVDs • Hardware  
Small Appliances • Housewares • Antiques*



***Stuff, stuff, and more stuff!***

### Comments from previous year's visitors

*'The 'Premiere flea market- Items displayed as if in a store' • 'Everything is so clean and neat!' • 'Have always wanted to visit St. Emma; this gave me a reason!' • 'Couldn't believe the quantity and variety of items.' • "The delicious food is enough to bring me back.' • 'I scheduled a vacation day so I can come!' • 'Everyone is so friendly!'*

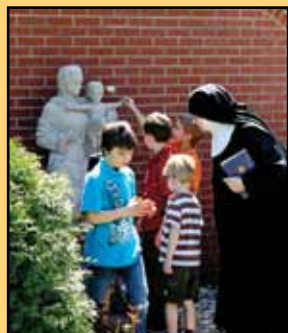
## + Rest in Peace +

We thank the following who remembered us in their wills.  
We pray for you who know their physical loss so keenly.

Anna Hvizdos, Whitney, PA  
Rev. John J. Keane, Pittsburgh, PA

*May the Lord let His face shine upon you  
and His love fully embrace you.*

**On the cover:** On May 1, the homeschoolers, who meet here several times a month for their "co-op" classes, held their May Crowning. Beginning in the Fatima Chapel, the nearly 80 participants, including many young children, processed from statue to statue ending at the outside Fatima Shrine. It was touching to see these families, especially the young children, praying the rosary with such affection.



## 2013 Calendar of Retreats

**July 19-25**

Six-Day **Silent**, Rev. Thomas Acklin, OSB

**July 19-26**

**Encounter with Silence**, Rev. John Mary Tompkins, OSB accommodations available at Retreat House

**August 2-3**

Busy Moms Retreat, \$80

**Sept. 20-22**

**Silent** (men/women), Rev. Boniface Hicks, OSB, \$155

**Sept. 27-29**

Women, Rev. Msgr. J. Edward McCullough, \$155

**Oct. 18-20**

Legion of Mary and others, Rev. Fred Gruber, \$155

**Oct. 25-27**

Married Couples (Retreat House)  
Rev. Angelus Shaughnessy OFMCap, \$300

### 2014

**March 7-9**

**Silent** Lenten (men/women) TBA

**March 14-16**

**Silent** Lenten (men/women) Rev. William Kiel

**March 28-30**

Lenten (men/women) Rev. Donald Breier

**April 4-6**

**Silent** Lenten (men/women) TBA

## TEE TIME FOR A NUN

Sponsor or play and enjoy a day of golf at the beautiful Hannastown Golf Club on Monday, August 26, 2013. \$100 per player.



The day includes:

- Green Fees with Golf Cart • 10:30 Shotgun Start - Scramble • Vehicle on Par 3 Hole-in-1! • Dinner at St. Emma Monastery (with silent auction) • Free Picture • Prizes • Trophies
- And a Great Time!

All proceeds will benefit the work  
of the Benedictine Nuns of St. Emma Monastery.

*Please remember us when revising  
or making your will.*

*Our legal name is:  
The Sisters of Saint  
Benedict  
of Westmoreland  
County*

*Our Federal ID-# is:  
25-1017575*

